

THE OTHER BATTLE OF WW

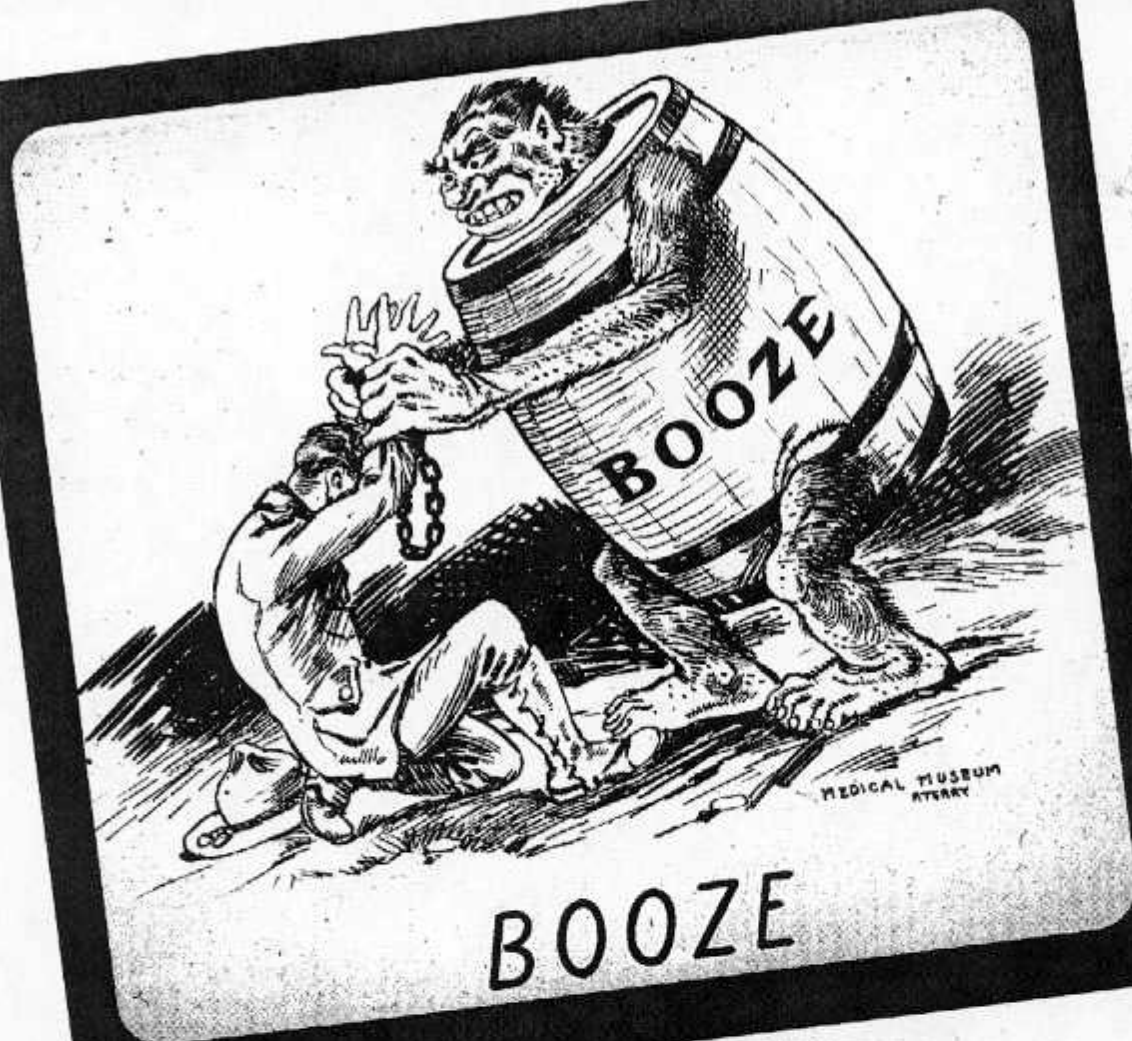
The U.S. government recognized the temptations awaiting its enlisted men during World War I, so it waged a propaganda war on their behalf. **MICHAEL RHODE** unearths some of the efforts



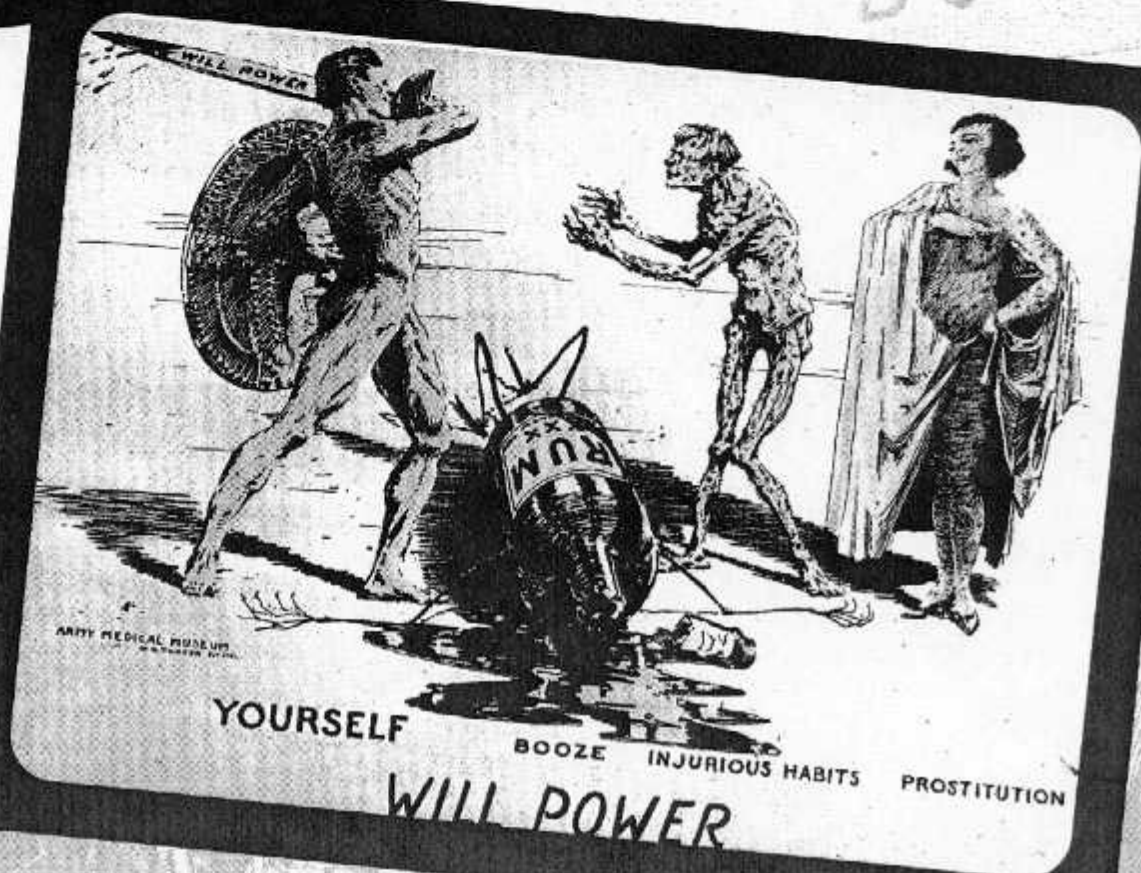
America joined World War I in 1917, months after conflict broke out between England, France and Germany. Almost immediately, concern grew about the spread of venereal disease, which always posed a problem in an armed conflict. During the war, 10 percent of illnesses in the American Expeditionary Force was related to sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis and gonorrhea. Social reformers persuaded the government that “control of the sex impulse”

by soldiers was a moral issue, not much different from a woman maintaining her chastity. Troops were therefore urged to keep “clean” for their Uncle Sam, sweetheart, wife, children, mother and father . . . a daunting task, especially since “patriotic prostitutes” and flappers were willing to do what they could to support the war effort. Young soldiers were urged to participate in sports, go to theaters or write letters home rather than fraternize with women. Once in France, soldiers were given flyers stating:

(text continued on page 108)



Paul Terry, who later went on to create Terrytoons, helped produce artwork intended to maintain soldiers' discipline. The government wanted to warn men away from alcohol, concerned that diminished inhibitions would lead to fraternizing that would, in turn, lead to venereal disease.





IS YOUR MIND DISEASED?



ARMY MEDICAL MUSEUM
WASHINGTON, D.C.

'Hello, Sport, -
want to have a
Good Time?'

MONTHLY REPORT
ANY MONTH - EVERY YEAR

Babies Blinded.. 64
Women Diseased.. 178
Men Crippled... 292
Innocent Victims... 242
Total..... 534

Signed
Venereal
Disease

A
Good
Month's
Business

The United States Government is permitting you to go on leave, NOT in order that you may SOW WILD OATS, but to give you an opportunity to improve your health, and advance your education.

If by misconduct, carelessness or vice, you are not improved in body and mind, you will have defrauded the government and will have wasted an opportunity to improve your station in life.

If you become intoxicated, associate with prostitutes, or contract a venereal disease, you are guilty of a moral crime.

Wouldn't it profit you more to purchase with that money a little gift for MOTHER, WIFE, SISTER or SWEETHEART??

DO NOT LET BOOZE, A PRETTY FACE,

A SHAPELY ANKLE MAKE YOU

FORGET!! THE AEF MUST NOT TAKE EUROPEAN DISEASE TO AMERICA. YOU MUST GO HOME CLEAN!!

Viewed through a prism of near-Victorian morality, the battle to control venereal disease and to diminish alcohol consumption during World War I resulted in preachy, finger-wagging cartoons and posters that lacked the humor and self-deprecation of later efforts. While outstanding cartoonists such as "Wally" Wallgren, Bruce Bairnsfeather, "Ding" Darling and Percy Crosby used war themes, the main source of educational cartoons was the Instruction Laboratory of the Army Medical Museum in Washington, D.C. Medical illustrator William T. Schwarz ran the Anatomical Art Department of the Laboratory, assisted by Morris L. Bower, who became a magazine illustrator after the war.



SMUTTY SUGGESTIO

The tools of the Devil and how they work



WILL YOU BE A FREE MAN
OR CHAINED



Although Paul Terry (most famous later as the Terrytoons animator) was on staff, and Max Fleischer and J.R. Bray of Bray Studios were consulted, no anti-VD animated films were made. Instead lantern slides (larger glass versions of today's 35mm slides) were produced to educate troops by the Medical Museum's 30 staff artists. The lantern-slide shows juxtaposed cartoons with stomach-turning pictures of advanced stages of venereal disease. The artists were mostly trained medical illustrators, and their cartoons are more similar to the era's political cartoons and magazine illustrations than they are to comic strips. While some cartoons were signed by Terry, E.G. Thayer and F.A. Anderson, most

were unsigned. Some art was probably done by other soldier-cartoonists like Roscoe Norrington, who joined the staff as a cartoonist in May 1919, but they mostly worked anonymously.

Of course, all wars have casualties, and World War I's skirmish against the scourge venereal disease was no different—it fell far short of complete success as many soldiers were unpersuaded by the government's entreaties. But the government's artists, largely working in anonymity, were on the front lines, producing cartoon work combining scare tactics and naivete that might now appear hopelessly idealistic yet is consistent with the America's cherished ideal of individual discipline. ■